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AUTHOR Ehman, Lee H.
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ABSTRACT

The study examines the instructional use of Channel One in a middle school over 18 months' time. Channel One is a 12-minute educational television news program broadcast daily to over 12,000 U.S. secondary schools. It is argued that while many students watch the programming, there is only a small minority of the classrooms where teachers actively incorporated it into their teaching. Two surveys of students, teachers, and parents were conducted, as well as class observations and teacher and administrator interviews. It is found that the teachers actively using Channel One create a curriculum fragment that leads to "real world" as distinct from "school" knowledge. Students are made aware of personal, political and social ideas not previously understood, and they are found to act on this knowledge by using newly acquired language in venues outside the formal school curriculum. Channel One forces a teacher to choose between the two kinds of knowledge; the majority of teachers in this study decided to forgo any serious consideration of Channel One's worldly knowledge in favor of the formal school knowledge already part of the curriculum. It is suggested that in ignoring Channel One, opportunities for exploring issues of direct relevance to young adults are lost, as well as the chance to contextualize and reflect on worldly knowledge. (Contains 26 references.) (AEF)

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# A Case Study of Channel One in the Instruction and Curriculum of a Middle School

Lee H. Ehman
Indiana University

ED 389 283

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## Abstract

This paper describes and interprets the use of Channel One in a middle school over 18 month's time. I argue that while many students watch the programming, it is only in a small minority of classrooms where teachers actively incorporate it into their teaching. I focus on the classrooms of two of these teachers in this case study. These teachers create a curriculum fragment that leads to "real world" as distinct from "school" knowledge--students' awareness of and sophistication about personal, political, and social ideas and issues not previously understood. Furthermore, students act on this knowledge by using newly acquired language in important venues outside the formal school curriculum.

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## Introduction and Purpose

This paper is not about technology per se. Rather, it studies if and how Channel One, an electronic Weekly Reader,[1] delivered by satellite television each day to many of the nation's secondary schools, is incorporated into teaching and learning. What use do teachers make of a sustained injection of news and often controversy-laden current events into their classrooms daily, and what social and political learning happens for students? I will argue that while many students watch the programming, it is only in a small minority of classrooms where teachers actively incorporate it into their teaching. In doing so, these teachers create a curriculum fragment that leads to "real world" as distinct from "school" knowledge--students' awareness of and sophistication about personal, political, and social ideas and issues not previously understood. Furthermore, students act on this knowledge by using newly acquired language in important venues outside the formal school curriculum.

This study describes and interprets the instructional use of Channel One in a middle school over 18 month's time. Channel One is a 12-minute educational television news program broadcast daily to over 12,000 U.S. schools each morning of the school week. About 6,800,000 students in grades 6 through 12 view it, more than 40% of all enrolled in the nation. Its avowed purpose

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[1]The irony of this characterization of Channel One, which I used in delivering the first paper I wrote on it (Ehman 1992) is that last fall Whittle Communications sold Channel One to KIII Communications, also publisher of Weekly Reader.

is to add to the secondary school curriculum knowledge and interest about national and global current affairs. Ten minutes of news reporting and special features chosen for interest to youth and two minutes of advertising comprise each broadcast.

Research on Channel One can be split into at least three kinds. First is theoretical analysis from a societal/educational perspective, often grounded in critical theory. For example, Apple (1993) and De Vaney (1994), conceive of Channel One as a social and cultural text, part of education's "cultural politics" embedded in reaction from the political right. Postman (1992) agrees with both in casting students and teachers as a captive audience, for sale to the highest bidder. Apple draws on the work of Fiske (1989) and Willis (1990), and others, in analyzing the meaning-making of television, from its creation by producers to reconstruction of this meaning by students and teachers.

Another category of inquiry is descriptive and based mainly on cross-sectional surveys.[2] These studies, most numerous of the three categories, generally focus on student and teacher perceptions and opinions about the program but do not probe into detailed description of its instructional use or integration into the curriculum, although several present estimates of what proportions of students watch it and how many teachers discuss it. The briefest synthesis of this research is that: 1) most students watch Channel One and think they learn from it; 2) most

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[2]My own survey and observational work is longitudinal, an exception to this generalization. Other exceptions are case studies, such as that reported by Robinson in De Vaney (1994).

teachers do not follow up the broadcasts with discussion or other integration into their classes; 3) relatively few students or teachers are offended by the advertisements; and 4) most teachers and students like and wish to continue it in their schools (Collins 1993; De Vaney 1994; Ehman 1993, 1994; Greenberg & Brand 1993; Hayes 1991; Henshaw 1992; Huffman 1991; Johnston 1995; Johnston, Brzezinski & Anderman 1994; Tiene & Whitmore 1995).

The third kind of research regarding Channel One aims to establish its effects on students. So far, two kinds of student outcomes have been studied--effects on student knowledge of news and current events presented on the program, and effects of the advertisements. By far the most extensive study on student knowledge of current events has been carried out by Johnston and his colleagues (Johnston, Anderman, Milne & Harris 1994). They have established that small but statistically significant learning gains occur in well-controlled field experiments. Importantly, Johnston and Anderman (1993) found that in schools where faculty and student interest in and use of Channel One was much higher than in most other schools, student learning was more pronounced. Johnston and his associates (Johnston, Anderman, Milne & Harris 1994) also carried out a field experiment in which the impact of the "You Decide" series in Channel One on the students in one school was studied. They found that students learned much more current events knowledge than a comparison group, and that the knowledge gap between "A" students and "C" students narrowed as a result of the "You Decide" discussions.

This study exemplified the generalization drawn from the various studies of knowledge effects: There is a more pronounced impact in schools and classrooms where teachers make use of Channel One in followup discussions and other linkages to the curriculum, rather than viewing it without further use (Ehman 1993; Hayes 1991; Johnston & Anderman 1993; Johnston, Brzezinski & Anderman 1994; Supovitz 1991).

Regarding the Channel One advertisement effects, Greenberg and Brand (1993) claimed that the ads led to students' more positive evaluation of the products and heightened desire to purchase them, although they had no data suggesting that purchasing was actually affected.

With the present study I wish to add to a very small group of case studies (see for example, Robinson 1994) of Channel One in classrooms. There are distinct strengths of qualitative research that come into play against the backdrop of research mentioned above in the three general categories of theoretical criticism, survey-based description, and experimental investigation of effects. For one thing, qualitative research permits portrayal of the phenomenon through the perceptions of the classroom actors--students and teachers. This portrayal can be grounded in their voices, based on their lived experience, as counterpoint to the voices of social and educational critics. The criticism of Apple and De Vaney is an essential contribution to our understanding of Channel One, but only one contribution. Those who actually encounter and make use of (or ignore) the

program should also be heard. Case studies can achieve this goal.

Another advantage of qualitative research is that it can lead to understandings grounded in the contextualized, local meanings important to specific people, situations, and times. These understandings are different than those gained from disembodied, abstracted, and non-situated accounts of researchers summarized above. Interpretation and meaning extracted from one form of research complements that from others, and that is my purpose here.

Third, qualitative research emphasizes the remarkable individual person and setting, gleaning from each exceptional case what is important to understand. In contrast, the survey and experimental findings alluded to above focus almost entirely on the central tendency in large groups of aggregated data, typified by group averages on current event tests and modal responses in percentage form to attitude items on surveys. We learn some things from these central tendency findings, but we do not know much about any particular persons, nor are the findings situated in any particular settings or times we can use to frame the findings.

The present case study does focus on unusual classrooms whose teachers and students make use of Channel One. Doing otherwise makes no sense to me--why study the non-use of something? I did spend a lot of time during my fieldwork in classrooms where Channel One was being ignored partially or

completely, but fortunately there were other things holding my attention there.[3]

## Methods and Data Sources

The setting for this study is Yorkton Middle School.[4] I have been studying Channel One descriptively there since 1991; prior to the 18-month case study which is the basis of this paper, I conducted two surveys of students, teachers, and parents and conducted several class observations and teacher as well as administrator interviews (Ehman 1992, 1993, 1994). The present study has extended that mostly quantitative work with an in-depth qualitative case study.

The school, with 1,300 students and about 80 certified staff, is the only middle school (grades 6-8) in a relatively affluent, rapidly growing, ethnically homogeneous midwestern community of 25,000. Recently, the school staff planned and implemented several restructuring moves, including formation of interdisciplinary teams of teachers and operating autonomously within a bell-free block schedule. Also, at the beginning of the study, the school "detracked" the curriculum (except in mathematics), eliminated their honors program, and included most

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[3]The study of Channel One in this case study was a major part of my research agenda in the school, but other facets interested me as well, and over 18 months I ended up collecting more data on non-Channel One phenomena, such as interdisciplinary team teaching, and parent involvement, as I did on Channel One.

[4]"Yorkton" is a pseudonym, as are other place and personal names used in the case.

special needs students in regular classrooms. The school has used Channel One for more than four years.

The research employs a case study method, in which I spent the entire 1993-94 school year as a participant observer attending classes, team and team leader meetings, parent meetings, and other school activities. I spent three days each week in the school, for a total of 110 days. During August through January of the 1994-95 year I continued observations of one classroom twice a month and continued informal conversations with the teacher, Beryl Anthony, a central figure in 1993-94.

I focussed my observations and interviews mostly on four teams; two 6th grade and one each in the 7th and 8th grades. For the first half of 1993-94 I depended mainly on observation and informal conversation with parents, students, teachers, and administrators; during the second half, I added audiotaped interviews. Throughout the 1993-94 year I audiotaped (and videotaped some) class discussions following Channel One broadcasts. (For reasons explained below, I focussed mainly on the 6th grade.) Extensive fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and documents provided the data for analysis and interpretation.

I analyzed the material for persisting themes, issues, and critical incidents, going back and forth between the emerging categories and concepts in my data, and the literature containing theory and research on Channel One and similar media in schools. While I used the voices of those in the classroom to portray their perceptions and constructions of meanings, I also narrated

in my own voice while interpreting theirs.

A note of caution and limitation: I have not attempted to present a "balanced" case, one representing the "average" Channel One experience. My purpose was quite the contrary. I sought to find out how teachers and students viewed the program when they actually attended to it seriously and made it part of a deliberate education process.

By stressing how 6th grade teachers employed Channel One (and not all of them used it to the extent that my two principal examples--Beryl Anthony and Bridgett Needham--did) I have deliberately depicted atypical classroom situations. The 6th grade has the youngest students usually viewing Channel One. Their teachers tended to be less concerned with subject matter disciplines they saw as the focus of schooling, and instead worried about promoting independent and sophisticated thinkers. Experiences of Channel One for kids in the two higher grades in Yorkton Middle School were quite different than their younger counterparts. Further, other 6th grade students had teachers who didn't utilize the broadcasts as much as these two teachers. Therefore, this case study is not "typical", but hopefully is generative with respect to my purposes.

## In the Shadows: Channel One in 7th and 8th Grades

My own survey data across three years showed that students' interest in Channel One waned as grade level increased in Yorkton MS (Ehman 1993). While overall student opinions were positive

about Channel One as an interesting and valuable source of information about news and current events, they eroded as students progressed from 6th to 7th to 8th grade. At first, I interpreted this as a maturational phenomenon, perhaps partly attributable to kids wanting to be "cool" and anti-adult in their thinking.

As I learned more about curriculum and instruction in this school, however, it became evident that there were better explanations for the apparent decreasing fall-off in student interest in Channel One. One is that the program was most often attended to seriously by 6th grade classes, and least in 7th and 8th grades, where it was relegated to the classroom shadows. Part of the reason for this is that the recent 7th and 8th grade team schedules force them to broadcast the program during the last 15 minutes of the day. (The 6th grade sees it during the first 15 minutes of the school day.) Also, in the 8th grade, the teachers have a "double instruction" period at the end of each day in order to have more sustained teaching of their subject for one out of four days for each group of students. In order to make this schedule work, each teacher has a different group of students at the end of each day, so continuity of Channel One program discussion is impossible.

Another important explanation is the increasing subject orientation of the teachers in the 7th and 8th grades, and concerns about content coverage and lack of time. 7th and 8th grade teachers orient themselves as members of academic

departments, and teach only one subject all day; in contrast the 6th grade teachers are non-departmentalized, and all teach language arts and mathematics, while "specializing" in teaching either social studies or science. In the two higher grades, there is strikingly little attempt to have students attend seriously to Channel One, let alone discuss it consistently or integrate it with other parts of the curriculum.

In my interviews and informal conversations 7th grade students commented on the lack of expectations from their teachers that they pay attention to Channel One broadcasts at the end of the day:

> Lee: ...do you think that Channel One for you is a serious way to get information about news and these other things?
>
> Sam: Well...it's like you can do your homework during it because like teachers don't really care if you do your homework because it's like, to some people it may be really important, to other people it might be kind of stupid to some people but I think it's pretty important. (AHIN, 3-28-94, p. 2)

While Sam thinks Channel One is important (and sometimes I observed him trying to watch it) he makes clear the teachers do not think so. Another 7th grade student, Leroy, typifies 7th and 8th grade students' response to the distractions and competition for time when Channel One is shown:

> Lee: Now this year I know that you watch it at the end of the day rather than at the beginning like you did last year. Do you think that makes much of a difference in how much attention you pay to it?
>
> Leroy: I sort of like the beginning of the day because ugh...you're not, I mean you don't have homework to do so you have sort of at the end of the day you pay less attention because you're ready to

leave. (JMIN, 3-23-94, p. 3)

Teachers confirmed in interviews and conversations what students said. Cindy, a first-year 7th grade teacher explained:

> Cindy: ...it's not well used in 7th grade because it's the end of the day and no one wants to listen to it and the end of the day is when people just say hey, we're not being graded for this so let's talk. It's social time.
>
> Lee: Yeah.
>
> Cindy: And a lot of people use it as time to start on their homework and it's just, it's not very well used. Nobody uses it in class because it is at the end of the day and they haven't seen it and....
>
> Lee: Including you?
>
> Cindy: Right. And the next day you couldn't even use what was on the day before because they've slept since then. I don't remember what was on much less them.
>
> Lee: Right.
>
> Cindy: And it's just, it's at a bad time of the day and it's very chaotic. (LHIN, 3-24-94, p. 21)

Nearly all of my classroom observations confirmed this picture of 7th and 8th grade teachers' and students' inattention to Channel One. The sole exception was for Neil Schultz, an 8th grade science teacher, who insisted on strict silence and attention during the broadcasts. But in my observations he never commented on nor discussed with students the content of any program. The program ended, he turned off the television set, and prepared the students for leaving school in an orderly fashion. Neil explained that there "didn't seem to ever be time" for Channel One discussions at the end of the day. He also confirmed, as did

other 8th grade teachers, that the "double instruction" schedule rotation of students each day was inhibiting. He continued with an explanation showing his concern over lack of content relating to his subject: "... of course in science sometimes it would have a scientific topic on there but mainly it was more of a social or current affairs...." (JPIN, 5-11-94, p. 30). From my observations and interviews across the school, this preoccupation with content and discipline boundaries, as well as the time of day in which it was shown, relegated Channel One to a remote part of the curriculum for most 7th and 8th grade teachers. The 6th grade classrooms provided a sharp contrast to this picture, and I now turn to their portrayal--where Channel One was taken seriously by teachers and students, and was integrated into the instruction and curriculum of some teachers.

## Channel One in Sixth Grade Curriculum and Instruction

Several of the 16 6th grade teachers used Channel One content as a springboard for writing and discussion; Channel One is shown during the first 12 minutes of the 75-minutes language arts period. In this context students "read" the Channel One "text", and construct their versions of news and current events depicted in the programs. Some teachers regularly used this experience as a means of having students articulate written and oral meanings and opinions, pushing them to examine and relate their values, and engaging them in dialogue about events and issues, often beyond their usual experiences.

Having found Channel One more closely linked to the regular curriculum in the 6th grade, I focussed my classroom observations for more than four months (three days a week) on the classes of two teachers on the same team--Beryl Anthony and Bridgett Needham. During that time I sat through all classes they taught, not just language arts, to develop a sense of how much infusion of Channel One information and issues there was into their other content areas--mathematics and social studies.

Beryl Anthony had taught for nine years at Yorkton, having interrupted her teaching career before that for her family. She was chair of the 6th grade teachers, a respected and powerful faculty member. Passionate about her teaching, she worried about juggling all the demands on her, especially given the restructuring going on in the school, and her assuming the leader's role for her five-teacher, 110-student, interdisciplinary team. Her students were very responsive to her in and out of class, and I could sense their affection for her, reciprocated in full by this nurturing but demanding professional.

Beryl thought Channel One "...the best thing we do [in the whole curriculum]. I think it is. Now that may be too strong a statement but it is <u>one</u> of the best things we do." (BSIN, 1-26-94, p. 19). When I challenged this statement, observing that national studies showed very little difference in current events knowledge resulting from Channel One, Beryl disagreed vehemently. Based on her comparison of students four years ago, before

Channel One, and the present, that there was "a huge difference." She went on to explain what the difference was:

> Beryl: ...they may not have understood as much about what some of the issues were that led to it and about uh, the reasons for it. And as I said not that these kids would be totally aware of even all that. But I think uh, I just think the sophistication of those issues and the things that are going on is one of the real advantages of Channel One. (BSIN, 1-26-94, p. 19)

To Beryl Channel One contributed to "sophistication" regarding social and political issues. She ruminated during the interview about what researchers were really measuring by standardized tests of current events knowledge and then finding only faint differences:

> Beryl: The...thing no test is going to be able to measure, is the fact that these kids have a common body of language, of information. Because before, if one person might know this and one person might know this and one person might know this. But here, when somebody brings up something, oh yeah, we all saw that on Channel One, and so it means that class discussion about any one of a number of those things can be much more meaningful because everybody has a common body of information and so even though some kids may not know that much more about current events, the kids that didn't know anything...at least have a better chance of being able to participate in the class discussion. (BSIN, 1-26-94, pp. 19-20)

With her claim that students gained a common body of language (she worked often to incorporate understanding of unfamiliar terms used on Channel One broadcasts) and information, Beryl touched on what seemed to be an important feature in hers and other classrooms I observed--the discussions of issues raised on the programs permitted widespread entry by students who otherwise might not have felt well enough informed to join in and express

ideas and opinions.

Beryl also believed firmly that some of her students were seeking out information about news and current events outside of school: "I think it's made them more aware of current events and news in general and I...must have four or five kids in here who already read Newsweek. Now I didn't read Newsweek in the 6th grade." (BSIN, 1-26-94, p. 23)

Bridgett Needham, in her first year teaching 6th grade (after having taught 5th grade in one of the district's five elementary schools for seven years), also thought students were motivated by Channel One to seek outside information:

Bridgett: I have many, many kids who now watch the regular news.

Lee: Uh huh. And you don't think....

Bridgett: And look at the newspaper.

Lee: You don't think they would have without Channel One?

Bridgett: I don't think so, no. I don't think so. Uh, some of them would but Channel One sparks their interest enough that a lot of times they want to see what...is going to be on Channel One so they watch the news to see what some of the late stories are. And they like that. They like to be able to come in and say "Oh, I saw that on the news last night". Or "Mrs. Needham, I saw that on the news this morning" and I've thrown up discussions now, not just what was on Channel One but anything else that you have seen in the news that you want to talk about and they come up with stuff. So I think that's a real plus. Uh, anything that is going to get them to watch the news, formulate opinions, whether they are right or whether they're wrong, or to ask some questions, why is this happening, how come that is that way. Uh, reading the newspaper, you know, they're, some of the kids are doing that and...you know, for some of these kids to pick up a news

> paper is...pretty good because it's not color, most of the time, and it's kind of dry reading, most of the time, and they're reading it so I think that's a real plus. (SDIN, 2-7-94, p. 27)

When I asked Bridgett what specifically was important about the program, she said:

> Bridgett: It generates a lot of thinking...for the kids and I think that's a strength. Always in 5th grade, and see I have to go back to that, always in 5th grade one of my goals for my class was to be independent thinkers. And I worked on that all year long. "What do you think? How do you feel about this? Why do you think that?" I always geared conversations around it. CO leads right into that for me. (SDIN, 2-7-94, pp. 27-28)

These two teachers, then, believe that the Channel One broadcasts are valuable for their students as sources of information and as motivators to seek out additional information outside the classroom, and to promote independent and sophisticated thinking about social and political ideas and events.

In order to add context I have selected a particular Channel One broadcast and class discussion of it in Beryl's classroom on September 15, a Wednesday, quite early in my observations. I chose it because it touches several themes important in my analysis. On the two days prior to this the main part of both Channel One programs focussed mainly on the Israel-PLO peace accord and reactions from high-school age Palestine and Israeli youth interviewed by a correspondent there.

On the Wednesday I have highlighted below, the broadcast included the first in a three-part series, run on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, on sexual harassment in schools. Each

day's segment ran for 4 minutes. Here is a synopsis of the three day's sexual harassment sections:

Wednesday: (The broadcast began with a 4-minute news story on the murder of a European tourist in Florida, and reactions by Florida officials as well as interview segments with Florida high school students; then two 30-second commercials, one for bubble gum and the other for a pizza chain.)

The Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings are used as a starting point for the topic, followed by brief references to the Navy's Tailhook scandal and allegations about Senator Robert Packwood; both had been covered on Channel One previously.

The program then transitioned to sexual harassment in schools being a common problem, with 81% of students reporting the experience.

Excerpts from the interview with a male psychologist used as an "expert" for the series were used to define the term, and cuts were used, between the psychologist and teenagers interviews, to exemplify his explanations of nervousness, discomfort, and patterns of unwanted incidents leading to negative feelings about yourself, and to avoidance behavior.

The segment ended with a brief interview segment with Heather, a 15-year old Iowa girl whose sexual harassment experiences would be the focus of Thursdays's program. The female anchor ended by saying it is difficult to speak out about sexual harassment, but very important.

Thursday: (The news story preceding this was of the trial of four suspects from the New York World Trade Center bombing; following were commercials for sports shoes and a girl's facial cleanser.)

Heather's story was narrated by her and the male Channel One reporter interviewing her. Following her breakup with a boy friend, the boy and his male friends bombarded her in and out of school with names, particularly "whore," and "bitch" [the words were beeped out but were unmistakable on Heather's lips], and circulated stories about her sexual promiscuousness. This continued for two years, during which her very high grades slipped to "C's", she lost weight, and became a "slob."

Plagued by self-doubts, she hated and avoided school.

Her female therapist commented that Heather felt she had no escape, and concluded herself that this was the case. She explained that victims of sexual harassment have to call for help, to do what they have to to get someone to listen, suggesting teachers, counselors, principals.

Heather commented that sexual harassment in schools can happen to anybody.

The reporter concluded by saying that Heather got help, finally changed schools, and is now doing much better.

Friday: (This segment was preceded by two 2-minute news stories, one on President Clinton's health care plans, and another on a space walk by shuttle astronauts; this was followed by commercials for a candy bar and a pizza chain.)

The reporter began by posing the question: What is sexual harassment? When does ordinary teasing cross the line to become harassment?

The psychologist explained that when it has bad effects, as when it affects ability to do school work, it is harassment. He then gave four criteria for sexual harassment:

When it is unwelcome;
When it is pervasive, repeated;
When there is a sexual element to it; and
When it interferes with ability to do work.

The reporter and psychologist then discussed the difference between flirting and sexual harassment, and the latter talked about one-sidedness and negative feelings involved with harassment.

The psychologist gave statistics about sexual harassment in schools, emphasizing that girls are not singled out particularly, with 76% of boys and 85% of girls reporting the experience. Further, 50% of girls and 67% of boys admit being harassers.

The psychologist pointed out that sexual harassment was illegal, constituting sexual discrimination under federal law. When the reporter asked what to do if one experiences

> sexual harassment, the psychologist said you don't have to suffer in silence, and to talk to someone you trust, naming a friend, parent, teacher, or counselor as examples.
>
> Following a 60-second soft drink commercial, there was a "pop quiz" involving a live remote from a school in Minnesota. The four students were asked whom of three supreme court justices was formerly in charge of the federal Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, identified in the question as being responsible for investigating sexual harassment in the work place. The students guessed William Rhenquist, and the reporter told them it was Clarence Thomas. He didn't link this to the opening of the harassment series on Wednesday.

On Wednesday in Beryl Anthony's room, the 26 students watched the program with only three indications of embarrassment about its sexual content--one boy tittered quietly when they announced the topic, and two girls sitting near me exchanged knowing and worldly glances during its opening minute. Five students appeared to be working on other things during the 4-minute segment, with the other 21 closely attentive. Toward the end of the segment, Beryl wrote on the board: "Are there other kinds of harassment?"

Following the end of the broadcast, Beryl asked them for comments or questions regarding Channel One that day, and got no immediate responses, a rarity in her room. She went on to state: "I know that sexual harassment is present in the halls of Yorkton Middle School." Beryl then asked them about other forms of harassment, pointing to her question on the board. Sara mentioned phone calls where the person doesn't speak and hangs up. Michael and Erin mentioned similar incidents. (The

following account is taken directly from my field notes of that day (FN, 9-15-93, pp. 2-3):

> Lisa, responding to another student's comment (that I didn't hear), said "That's sexual harassment." Beryl agreed. She asked, "Do they have the right to do that?" Lisa and others answered no.
>
> Don said if people harass you you should tell teachers or the office. Beryl replied that you should first tell your parents. Tom suggested seeing the counselor. Beryl agreed with that, and noted that Mrs. Gibson, the 6th grade counselor, had talked to them yesterday [but not about sexual harassment specifically].
>
> Beth told of being teased in the halls for being so little. Beryl sympathized, and asked if it was the same people teasing her over and over. Beth said she didn't know. Beryl told her that if it was repeated or confined to one individual, to be sure to tell her. "You let me know, ok?"
>
> Samantha told of her sister receiving an obscene phone call last year. Beryl asked what her sister did. Samantha said she hung up.
>
> Carrie told a story of her aunt and little sister in Denver being harassed via phone by people that were watching from someplace nearby, and that is was scary. Beryl asked if they reported it, but Carrie didn't know. Beryl: "You can report that to the authorities; you can have your phone number changed." Gretchen and Jim added other phone call stories.
>
> Beryl: "I want to get back to harassment things in the hallways. I don't want you to think it just happens in high schools, just because it was depicted that way on Channel One. Also, boys can be harassed as well as girls."
>
> Don: "It happened to my Mom at work."
>
> Beryl: "You don't have to put up with it." Then she called attention to the sexual harassment policy on a specific page in the school's Student Handbook, and that it was state law. She urged them to read it, and know that they didn't have to put up with it. If it is a pattern or one person then they can report it, and there will be an investigation, and can be grounds for expulsion.
>
> Beryl: "If you make remarks yourself, even if you don't think they are harassment, and the other person does, you can be reported."

She urged them to tell parents or guardians if they experienced harassment. "We want this to be a safe and pleasant place to be."

8:10 [12 minutes after the end of Channel One] Beryl made the transition to language arts. She referred to a book, Mrs. Fish, they'd been reading, involving a girl their age who was teased badly in school because she was poor, an orphan, and lived in a junk yard. "I want to ask you a question: 'Is Joyce being harassed?'" A girl answers, "Yes, but not sexually." Beryl asked what kind of harassment it is, then, and wrote answers on board: "Social; class; economic."

Beryl said that "...some kids get harassed for being a good student. I was." Then she told of being a teacher's daughter who did well in school and was teased for getting good grades because of that, even though she "...had to work even harder [than other students] for good grades."

Erin told a story about getting the only A in class, and being accused of being a "teachers pet". Then the discussion took up other aspects of the book, and the harassment topic was left behind.

I've chosen this excerpt of about 30 minutes (including the Channel One broadcast and ensuing discussion) from the dozens of hours I observed because it illustrates several aspects of how the broadcast is incorporated into teaching, and connected to the curriculum, by Beryl Anthony and several of her colleagues. It also shows how Channel One content provides students awareness of social phenomena not yet directly experienced by most their age, and the basis for connecting what they do know and understand with new ideas.

The sexual harassment series gave the students a window into a problematic part of their newly-emerging sexual world. Beryl Anthony chose to address the topic by having them relate examples they'd heard of or experienced through family members, and several were able to do that. Beth, a very diminutive girl, also

related a non-sexual harassment incident that bothered her--being teased in the hallways for being small.

Beryl also got the students to practice hypothetical responses to sexual and other harassment in the building, following up the advice given by reporters and the psychologist "expert" on the Channel One segment they'd viewed. This related to the sixth graders' induction into the middle school. Only in their first month out of the comfort and security of self-contained rooms in elementary school, they found themselves in a very large school where hall passings were confusing, noisy, and congested. The discussion provided the springboard for rehearsing how to behave and protect oneself in the schools they were to experience for years to come. It also added to the students' language facility. "Sexual harassment" is not a term used normally nor easily by a sixth grader; Beryl sanctioned its use by discussing the topic openly in class and having students practice using the language. The embarrassment and perhaps fear associated with the word "sexual" was dissipated for these kids.

Beryl also used the topic to bridge to the curriculum, in this case to the language arts period, where they were to discuss a book with themes connected to their harassment discussion. The students saw the connection easily, and moved seamlessly into that discussion from the last, so that the two instances of this social problem in schools merged into their frameworks for viewing and managing their own school experiences.

In her interview, Beryl commented on the students'

increasing awareness and sophistication about their social and political environments resulting from watching Channel One; this incident shows that the teacher plays an important role in that development. Without her decision to engage students in discourse on the topic, and then connect it to the story they were reading in language arts, the students might not have gained anything at all from simply viewing the television program.

On the following day, the second part in the sexual harassment series was shown, and while all the students except two were rivetted on the story, afterward there was little discussion of Heather's powerful story of being harassed for two years. Beryl tried twice to engage them, but the students seemed to prefer talking about the terrorism segment instead. On the last day of the series the school was dismissed at noon in order that teachers could have three hours of interdisciplinary team planning time. Therefore, Channel One was shown just before school let out, and I got to observe in the 6th grade what happened every day throughout the 7th and 8th grades. After the program ended, Beryl tried to begin a discussion by asking the students what they noticed about the statistics of incidence in schools. The students recalled accurately the facts from the program, and started to engage in thinking about the issues involving girls harassing boys as well as same-gender harassment, but end-of-school announcements broke in and terminated further opportunity to discuss the material. Beryl and the students had just two minutes, and it wasn't enough.

There were two noteworthy sequels to this story. First, on the same Wednesday the first part of the series was shown, a 6th grade boy (bright, and labelled as "Emotional Disabled", and mainstreamed in regular classes) in another teacher's (Cathy O'Donald) room was reported by a girl as having harassed her sexually, repeatedly calling her a "fag, bitch, and whore." The girl at first was not going to report this, but a male friend urged her to do so. Four of the five teachers on the team in which this happened, including Beryl Anthony, Bridgett Needham, Sandra White, and Cathy O'Donald, discussed the incident at lunch. They compared their experiences of students harassing others at other schools they'd taught in, and concluded it was common. When Beryl, joining the discussion after it had begun, heard about the girl's having been called names and reporting it, exclaimed: "Oh, with the Channel One series they [persons reporting incidents] know they [people harassing] can't get away with it." These teachers saw the effects on students of the broadcasts, and had convincing evidence, by virtue of the girl's report, that these effects were real.

The girl, Sue, came to me two days later and explained that she had been talking to Mrs. O'Donald, her teacher, about the incident; the latter had apparently told the girl of my interest. Sue explained that she had reported the boy because she "...wouldn't stand for being called names." (She didn't mention the Channel One series in the conversation; regretfully I didn't question her about that.) I don't know if Sue thought of

Heather's case from Channel One as a model in making her report to her teacher, but nevertheless the model was there for her.

The second case of sexual harassment I learned about (I was not present in school that day) happened on October 14, just one month after the series was shown. A female substitute teacher in Bridgett Needham's room apparently engaged in "inappropriate [sexual] touching" of three boys and at least one girl. The three boys made up an excuse to leave the room, and then went to the counselor's office and told her, Marianne Gibson, what had happened. After checking the story with other students, Marianne consulted with the principal, Molly Kramer, and after a brief meeting with her the substitute left the building.

No adult I talked to in the school connected either incident to the Channel One series on sexual harassment.[6] Nevertheless, I concluded there was a probable linkage. The students' awareness had been raised about sexual harassment in school; the language they needed to convey their stories to Mrs. Needham or Mrs. Gibson had been rehearsed through discussion. The Channel One series turned out to be no hypothetical and remote television program for these kids, and they put their awareness and language to use: these were certainly stimulated by the harassment series they had seen a month earlier.

Throughout the 6th grade, discussion provoked by Channel One resulted from news stories or series like this one--they depicted

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[6]I refrained from asking the students. It was clear that the staff didn't want interest about the incident heightened in kids' minds more than it was already.

controversial issues with direct connections to experiences of the students, very often involving strong emotions. A "Children of Divorce" series provoked a very open discussion about students' personal experiences, and the male teacher I was observing openly added his own experiences with divorce to the discussion. During a series on alcoholism in families, I sat in astonishment as a young girl quietly explained to the class her own father's alcoholism and what it meant to her. There were many other examples. The programs served as a vehicle to bring into the classroom discourse at an adult level about topics the students had not confronted in such a public way before.

Postman and Powers observe that television

> ...eliminates the exclusivity of worldly knowledge. This means that the knowledge that distinguishes adults from children, that is, the "secrets" of adult life--political secrets, sexual secrets, and so on--are now constantly in view.... (1992, pp. 148-149)

Students I observed were being introduced to "worldly knowledge," personally relevant knowledge about important adult secrets that connected with their lives, sometimes in painful ways. But the connections I observed seemed productive; the children were being inducted into the adult world under the guidance of caring teachers who prized the independence and sophistication of their classroom charges. Channel One helped provide the worldly knowledge, and the teachers helped render it into positive experiences for students in a relatively safe environment.

Not all discussions were so personal in nature. Bridgett Needham explained above in her interview that she wanted to

promote independent thinking about the news and current events. Like many of the 6th grade teachers, she enjoyed stimulating these decisions among her students, and listening to them form and try out arguments and opinions about controversial social and political issues. Her discussions typically lasted longer than other teachers I observed, often taking 30 minutes out of the precious 75 minute language arts period.

During a two-week period beginning in late October, for example, I observed detailed discussions of several controversial issues sparked by the Channel One broadcasts. Most often Bridgett began these by having students explain what they felt important in the news and why; invariably 10 or 15 hands were in the air the moment she asked. On one occasion she had them write their ideas in their language arts journals (a device often used by 6th grade teachers), and then had them share their ideas within their already-formed groups of three (they sat in these groups throughout language arts.) Then she asked them to present individual reports to the whole class, having each person stand on their chair as they did so ("to give them a stage"--to heighten the effect of the report for the presenter and the audience--she explained to me later,)

During these discussions the students took positions, challenged each other, and responded to probes from Bridgett. Topics they analyzed in depth included AIDS in the United States and the obligation of health providers to inform patients about testing positive for HIV; what punishment should be given for a

homeless arson in California; role and obligations of the news media regarding bias in coverage of politicians (for two days in response to a series on this topic); and the televised debate between Al Gore and Ross Perot over NAFTA. During the latter discussion Bridgett explicitly connected ideas to their social studies classes, where study of Mexico was upcoming.

During the NAFTA debate discussion some students showed they had not just watched the Channel One reporting of it, but had watched the debates at home, preparing themselves for what they knew would ensue in class the next morning. Here is an excerpt of the discussion, beginning after Bridgett has solicited an explanation of what NAFTA stood for and meant:

Bridgett: So what is Perot afraid of in NAFTA?

John: We'll lose jobs.

Chris: If we cut tariffs, jobs will go to Mexico, and there will be less jobs here in America.

Nancy: I like the cutting of the tax, but don't like Mexico taking over jobs.

Norm: If Mexican workers go [actually come] to the U.S. and work for less, they won't have enough money to buy things here, and so they'll have to go back [to Mexico].

Bridgett: The Mexicans wouldn't come here for the jobs--they'd get them down there with new factories.

Julie: I agree with Perot, but is he trying to leave it like it is, or trying to change it?

Leo: Gore wouldn't let Perot answer the questions.

Bridgett: That's a debating style. We have to listen to what they say, not how they say it--if they're rude.

Chris: I like Ross Perot. But he's clever, and I think

he says things sometimes just to "buy time" to think of an answer.

Bridgett: Yes, I think you're right, it's a ploy. (FN, 11-10-93, p. 4)

Bridgett is encouraging these 6th graders to form and articulate their thinking publicly about this issue. Students comment on what they believe will be effects of NAFTA on Mexicans and U.S. citizens, and also express opinions on the form and tactics of the debate itself.

Walter Parker has made a point about citizenship that is relevant to what Bridgett Needham, Beryl Anthony, and other 6th grade teachers are doing in their classrooms:

> Discussion (talk, conversation, deliberation) is the most basic and essential form of participatory citizenship. It is in discussion that disagreements are revealed, clarified, and analyzed; alternatives created and explored; the notion of the "loyal opposition" made real; common purposes perceived; decisions made; and action planned. Talk is <u>not</u> cheap. In a very real sense, public talk is the medium through which the public is created. (1991, p. vi)

Bridgett and her colleagues at Yorkton Middle School are helping to create a "public" through this form of citizenship education, and Channel One provides the information and context within which it is done.

Students confirmed the idea that publics were being created. In an interview with Lisa, a student in Beryl's room, she explained why she liked Channel One, and about her growing interest in the news as a result of watching and discussing it in school:

Lisa: because...it like, it's kind of like a news thing and like at home they have the news things like the kids don't really understand them and this

like makes it better, you get more interested in it.

Lee: I see. Do you watch news at home?

Lisa: Not really.

Lee: No?

Lisa: Now I'm starting to in 6th grade.

Lee: Why? Why are you starting to now, do you think? Just because you're old enough?

Lisa: Well since I've seen CO I think that's pretty neat so I wanted to see how the other news [programs] are. (AMIN, 5-23-94, p. 1)

Nancy, another girl in the same class, told me that she also began watching the news this year, and discussed it with her parents, sometimes disagreeing with them. She talks about where her interest comes from:

Lee: Is this the first year you've been interested in the news or were you interested in it before?

Nancy: Well this is really the first year that I got into it a lot 'cause it made you want to learn more about it.

Lee: So it's sort of as a result of Channel One that you became interested, or at least in part?

Nancy: Yeah, all of it, really.

Lee: Yeah, did you watch...last year did you watch television with your parents?

Nancy: No. (LSIN, 6-1-94, p. 2)

Late in the year Steve, also in Bridgett's class, wrote a persuasive essay for a language arts assignment, in which he argued the merits of Channel One. I interviewed him after hearing his oral report, beginning by asking him what is important about the program:

Steve: Well it tells us what's going on in the world...

Lee: Yeah, okay.

Steve: ....and it tells it so we're interested in it in a good way.

Lee: Okay. Alright.

Steve: And it lets us use new words that we've learned in class because we don't like go out and talk to our friends and use these big long words....

Lee: Can you think of any examples recently maybe that have been on CO that you think have been important that you've learned about?

Steve: Ugh, what's been going on in like Somalia and ugh every place cause at dinner we talk about this stuff and I can talk about it now.... (MJIN, 6-1-94, pp. 1-2)

Steve: It's like a real cool program that tells stuff, what's going on like in a way that we understand it and we'd be interested in it and it's like from kids' point of view. (MJIN, 6-1-94, p. 2)

These three students make several points about their view of Channel One that typified ideas of many of the students I talked to.. Steve stressed the frequently expressed thought that the program was produced from a young person's point of view and uses understandable language. All three indicated that students carried their interest home to discussions with their parents, and seemed proud of their newly established parity in discussions.[6] They also confirmed the impact Channel One had on their growing interest in their social and political worlds.

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[6] This point was confirmed in several parent interviews about the extent of their children's seeking out and discussing news and current events with them at home.

## An Interpretation: Creating a Curriculum Fragment

One way of interpreting this case is to focus on curricular decision making by teachers and the impact of these decisions on students. Cremin's distinction is important: "...between academic knowledge and everyday knowledge, between the knowledge taught and valued in school and the knowledge needed and valued in everyday life" (1990, p. 64). McNeil puts the same idea a bit differently in the context of her "defensive teaching" concept, where she draws the distinction between "real world knowledge" and "school knowledge"; defensive teachers transform the former into the latter (1988, p. 191).

Given this difference, I hold that Channel One forces a teacher to choose between the two kinds of knowledge, and therefore between alternative conceptions of appropriate curriculum. The vast majority in my case study decide to forego any serious consideration of Channel One's "worldly knowledge" in favor of the formal school knowledge already part of the sanctioned curriculum.[7] We have seen two instances of teachers choosing to incorporate Channel One into the regular school day; they both articulated reasons having to do with promoting real

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[7]Channel One has been adopted by many schools throughout the state in which this case study was conducted. However, during the 1990-1991 period when its adoption was challenged, the state's Attorney General prohibited its showing during the regular school day (defined by the minimum daily contact time) and relegated it to the non-academic part of the school. Schools had to make room for it by providing at least 12 minutes more than the state minimum contact time. Legally, therefore, as well as practically, Channel One was excluded from the sanctioned curriculum of public schools.

world knowledge. For Bridgett, especially, this decision meant less time available to language arts study. Yet the decision and tradeoffs were clear to both Bridgett and Beryl, who valued their students' increasing awareness, interest, and sophistication regarding news and current social problems.

Neither teacher made very much connection of Channel One to the regular subject matter classes they taught, although as we have seen above this occasionally happened. I asked students about this in each interview, and none reported seeing any connections made beyond brief references to Channel One segments by teachers relating to topics being studied in regular classes; examples usually involved social studies. This is not to say there were no connections actually being made, either explicitly by teachers or mentally by students. But my point is that even these devoted Channel One using teachers were creating a separate curriculum with the broadcasts and subsequent discussions and journal writing activities.

This separate curriculum was not "hidden" nor was it only "implicit"--the teachers using it were clear about their intentions for its hoped for outcomes. But it was separate from everything else in the school day, amounting to what I call, for lack of a better term, a "curriculum fragment," one not well integrated with the official, sanctioned curriculum. It was clearly not the same as the curriculum for other subjects. There were no graded assignments on any of its aspects, nor were there quizzes or tests. Students' knowledge of Channel One was not the

subject of parent-teacher conferences. The teachers didn't prepare lessons; indeed, the volatile nature of Channel One ruled out most attempts to anticipate its content or plan specific teaching approaches.

This fragmentary curriculum was important for students, however. It promoted awareness of the political and social worlds outside their regular lives. Their increasing "sophistication," using Beryl's term, consisted partly of new language and concepts, and practice in the construction of positions and arguments with this language. We have seen that some students were led to seek out other sources of news. Some practiced their newly found civic competence at home by discussing these ideas at the dinner table in a new parity relationship with their parents.

In the aftermath of the sexual harassment series, we have seen two instances in which the awareness, language, and rehearsal were put to use in reporting harassment, by another student and by a substitute teacher, to school adults who responded positively. The students used the new language to act in powerful, adult ways not previously accessible to them. The curriculum fragment created by Beryl and Bridgett helped equip the students with real world knowledge, and they acted upon in ways they would never be able to act upon the school knowledge gained from the formal curriculum.

## Conclusion

The formal curriculum is full, and there is always the press

of having too little time for teachers to do what they believe important in their classrooms. Little wonder, then, that most teachers ignore Channel One--it takes valuable time to discuss, there is no way to prepare for the content, and it is not often directly connected to the content of classes nor the details of lessons already planned. There are no testable answers. Why use it, most teachers ask?

I believe there are important lost opportunities from ignoring Channel One.[8] One is the opportunity to explore topics, issues, and questions of direct relevance to youth--what Hunt and Metcalf (1968) call the "closed areas", and what Parker (1991) labeled "persistent problem themes", of the curriculum. Another is the chance to contextualize and reflect on what Postman and Powers (1992, p. 148) refer to as "worldly knowledge." Bridgett and Beryl in this case study have articulated other important opportunities as well.

By emphasizing Channel One in their classrooms and creating a meaningful but fragmentary curriculum, 6th grade teachers in this case study have taken the side of promoting real world knowledge, while most 7th and 8th grade teachers have come down in favor of school knowledge clearly reflecting their values and curriculum decision making.

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[8]I outline these and other "lost opportunities" in greater detail in Ehman, 1994.

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